



## NEWS RELEASE

1415 Melody Lane Building G Bisbee AZ 85603

[www.cochise.az.gov](http://www.cochise.az.gov)

**For Immediate Release**

February 7, 2018

Contact: Amanda Baillie

[abaillie@cochise.az.gov](mailto:abaillie@cochise.az.gov)

520-432-9214

### **Cochise County embraces cutting edge drone technology**

Cutting edge technology utilized by Cochise County will help speed up major planning projects and save taxpayers thousands of dollars annually.

Members of the Highway & Floodplain Department have begun flying a drone to help with mapping and topography tasks that previously had to be done manually.

But thanks to the drone's abilities to quickly and accurately capture data from the air, information gathering that may have taken up to two weeks to complete can now be done in just a couple of days or less.

"We cover a lot of roadways and sometimes we're working on projects that are three to four miles long," explained Land Surveyor Dan Eichelberger. "We would use GPS to map for things like drainage issues or rights of way and that takes time. But by flying a drone we can get all the data we need in far less time, maybe even a day."

A group of Highway & Floodplain employees underwent training to become certified drone pilots. They were taught by Don Wirthlin, Cochise College's Unmanned Aerial Systems instructor, who has more than four decades of piloting experience.

One of those newly certified pilots is Civil Engineer Brad Simmons, who said using the \$1,500 drone will have many benefits.

"This will be much more efficient because we can process the data quickly and it will help us to move projects along much faster," he said.

Added Land Surveyor Dale Jones, who is also certified, "Using the drone will drastically cut the time it takes to go out in the field and gather the information we need. That also means projects will take less time in the design phase."

The county currently outsources larger mapping projects, sometimes at a cost of up to \$50,000, but will now be able to handle many of those in-house, thanks to the drone's technology and capabilities. It is believed Cochise County is the only county in Arizona to be taking this modern approach.

"The drone creates contour maps that are amazing, as well as 3D images," Jones said. "I'm excited about using the drone. My father owned a land surveying company and he was always pushing to be cutting edge. It's great that the county is doing that also and that I get to be a part of that."



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To watch a video demonstrating how the drone will be used visit

<https://youtu.be/hRiARb2Hqbs>

## Photo – Drone 4

Don Wirthlin, Cochise College's Unmanned Aerial Systems instructor, teaches Cochise County Civil Engineer Brad Simmons and Land Surveyor Dan Eichelberger how to fly a drone

## Photo – Drone 5

The drone will be utilized by Cochise County Highway & Floodplain Department to save both time and money on planning projects

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Cochise County provides regional leadership and effective, high-quality services with personal and professional integrity. Located in the southeast corner of Arizona, Cochise County has natural beauty, world famous history, and a fascinating culture. Covering 6,219 square miles, and with a population of approximately 128,000 people, the County provides vital services to the unincorporated areas of the region. It is home to a diverse range of incorporated cities, including Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Benson, Douglas, Tombstone, Willcox, and Huachuca City. Visit [www.cochise.az.gov](http://www.cochise.az.gov) for more information.

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